GIFT OF IRVING LEVY

THE FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY - PROVED BY FACTS AND FIGURES

"By their fruits ye shall know them" (*Matt.* vii, 20).

NATURALLY enough, the Christian considers Christianity a huge success. It came from God, so it could not possibly be a failure. It is the purest thing in religions ever known. The personality of its founder is beyond the power of humanity to produce or invent. The evidence for the truth of Christianity is overwhelming.

That, briefly, is the line of argument usually taken to prove that Christianity is not a failure.

Many persons decline to admit any of these contentions. But even if the truth of all of them were conceded, it would be beside the point raised in this paper. It might be shown beyond dispute that Christianity is a religion of Divine purity, beauty, and truth. It would not go one inch towards proving that religion to be universally or even generally accepted. The extent to which a religion is accepted (and obeyed) is what we mean when we speak of its success or its failure. If a judge wanted to ascertain whether a testator's directions had been carried out, would he consult the original will only? Of course not; he would see what the executors had been doing. Would any Christian controversialist admit that the success of Mohammedanism could be proved by quotations from the Koran? You may believe very firmly that Christianity is so good that it ought to be successful. The question is, Has it been successful? The success of any religion cannot possibly be estimated except by consideration of the effects which it has produced. Even these cannot be accurately determined, for many non-religious factors may contribute to the result. If Christianity is a success, it has accomplished the objects for which it was established. If it has not accomplished those objects, it is a failure.

Now, what was the purpose for which Christianity was established? It claims to be a Divinely-ordained means of saving human beings from the power of sin in the present life, and from

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its penalties in a future life. That the first object has been attained with many persons cannot well be denied, though the influence of co-operating causes must not be overlooked. That the second object has been achieved remains to be seen.

Fully to discuss these questions would be to open up the whole theological system which, to the ordinary man, represents Christianity, and as that cannot be done in a short essay it had better be left untouched. Let the effects of Christianity alone be considered, without regard to the truth of the dogmatic framework which they are supposed to justify. Let us apply the Scriptural maxim: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." If Christianity is a human development, like Buddhism or Mohammedanism, it must be credited with a very respectable degree of success. If it is a Divinely-revealed system, it works out as the most astounding failure in human history.

Let us assume that Christianity was founded with the definite aim stated in the Fourth Gospel: "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (*John* iii, 17). Has it achieved that aim? A glance at the state of affairs to-day supplies the answer. Mankind has not been redeemed from sin either by Christianity or any other agency.

War.

In the late War all the principal nations concerned were Christian nations, but Christian principles did not for a moment deter them from flying at one another's throats like wild beasts.

Christianity has failed to prevent war. It has failed to subdue the spirit which leads to war. Look back on history, and you will find that many of the bitterest and most disastrous wars have been waged by Christian peoples against other Christian peoples.

More than this. Some of the most unjustifiable wars have been waged for the express purpose of spreading the Christian faith. Some of the early Christian emperors passed laws for the protection of Christianity which, however they may have accorded with the spirit of the age, were shockingly cruel and resulted in serious mischief. Charlemagne compelled the Saxons at the point of the sword to embrace Christianity. To give up their barbarous superstitions may have been a good thing for them, but they could have little enthusiasm for a religion forced upon them with so much brutality. The Crusaders in Palestine

slaughtered Jews and Moslems with the approval of Christendom. Equally horrible were the Albigensian wars, which were deliberately proclaimed by Pope Innocent III in order to impose the orthodox faith upon peaceable and prosperous communities which at that time were the most civilized in Europe. The Thirty Years' War arose out of the quarrels between Protestants and Catholics which resulted from the Reformation. This war was waged with incredible ferocity, and so terrible were its effects that by the end of the struggle the population of Germany was reduced by some ten millions, and that was more than one half. Wars of "progress" as well as wars of defence have often been justified by modern Christians (Westermarck, *Moral Ideas,* vol. i, p. 362). It is quite clear that, although Christianity has often preached peace, it has in practice done little to alleviate the conditions from which war springs. In that matter it has been, and is, almost powerless.

The candid Lecky remarks: "With our present experience we are driven to the melancholy conclusion that, instead of diminishing the number of wars, ecclesiastical influence has actually and very seriously increased it.....With the exception of Mohammedanism, no other religion has done so much to produce war as was done by the religious teachers of Christendom during several centuries" (*History of European Morals*, vol. ii, pp. 254-5).

The State.

It may be said that the State, its functions being almost exclusively secular, cannot regulate its conduct by the law of Christ, which is intended to govern individual relations only. But we must remember that the State is made up of individuals; its moral standards should therefore be the same as those of its members, since morality is not altered by being extended to the many as well as to the few. Indeed, morality, being essentially social, ought to find its completest expression in communal and international life. However, the New Testament contains no rules for the guidance of this larger life, and Christianity receives only lip-service from the State. It will be remembered that a famous bishop once said that the nation which obeyed Christ's precepts would not last a week—or was it a fortnight?

Now, if Christianity had succeeded in moulding the lives of the majority of any people, the results would surely work out

in their public affairs. As they do not do so very satisfactorily in any State, we can only conclude that Christianity does not materially affect the conduct of the majority of its individual citizens. Thus, as regards its influence on the policy of nations, Christianity must be pronounced a failure. And it would not have failed with the nations if it had not also failed with most of the individuals who make up nations. Only in October, 1921, Dr. Sprott, the Bishop of Wellington, New Zealand, emphatically maintained that there is to-day no Christian State in existence. In that respect the Bishop of Wellington was right.

Admissions.

Father Vaughan and others have said that, although the Church has had a long career, the religion of Christ has not failed, because it has never been tried. That is a strange admission for a Christian priest to make. It is in reality a blank confession of failure. All along the Church has been teaching what it has *called* the religion of Christ. It was established for the very purpose of teaching that religion. Yet, by its own confession, it has been teaching something else. And Father Vaughan did not explain the difference between the two things. Why should there be any difference between Christianity and the religion of Christ? Whose fault is it if the religion of Christ has been misunderstood and neglected by his own followers? What is that but failure?

So lately as December, 1921, the Dean of Canterbury said: "The Church is shattered into fragments. Everywhere there is entire confusion. The people see that there is no discipline; the law is not observed, there is no authority which is absolutely respected, and no government. You cannot expect the mass of the people to have confidence in a Church which is in that condition."

Again, writing in the *Evening Standard* last October, Dean Inge said: "The failure of Christianity has become a commonplace." The Oxford Conference of Modern Churchmen in August, 1922, confessed to the failure of their Church. A great part of modern apologetics consists merely of excuses for the failure. Into the causes of the failure I cannot enter here; I will merely state my conviction that they lie chiefly in theological doctrines and prepossessions which modern research has shown to be fallacious and illusory.

Three years ago the Anglican Archbishops issued the Report of their Fifth Commission of Inquiry, entitled "Christianity and Industrial Problems." On p. 47 the Report states :—

> In the fifty years which laid the foundations of modern England the influence of the Church as a witness to social righteousness was, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, almost negligible.

And on p. 48 we read :—

> We have to confess, then, the failure of the Church to give a faithful witness in the face of the moral problems which the Industrial Revolution brought forth. Can we say that the Christian conscience of the present time is awake to social duty?

After showing that the Christian conscience has been at least partially awakened (by liberal-minded thinkers, be it noted), the following passage occurs :—

> We know our past failure in witness and in service; even now it is too much to say that English Christendom as a whole is prepared to work Christ's principles out to their full conclusion, or to make the sacrifices which they require. But there is a dawn of hope, and the next generation may see a better day.

Even after centuries of failure and with the intellectual basis of its faith in rapid decay, the Church is still able to hope.

Poverty.

Just as it failed to do away with war, Christianity has failed to grapple effectively with the evils of poverty. It has tried, I know, but it has tried in the wrong way. It has trusted too much to optional and occasional charity, and has not perceived the need of just and equal laws. Indeed, when such laws have been proposed the representatives of religion have very commonly been among their bitterest opponents. During the nineteenth century, with few exceptions, the wise reforms which became necessary were fought at every stage by the Anglican clergy and their allies. To give only one instance, when the Reform Bill of 1831 was introduced two bishops voted for the second reading and twenty-one against it. Every step in the march of civilization has been taken in the face of this stolid contentment with existing conditions, this determined objection to improving them. A century ago the Church consoled the workers for their miserable state in this life by promising them a much better time in heaven. As Lecky remarks, "in the sphere of simple poverty it can hardly be doubted that the Catholic Church has created more misery than it has cured" (*History of European Morals*, vol. ii, p. 40; R. P. A. ed.).

Women.

Christianity has not secured equality in the eyes of the law between men and women. This is not perhaps surprising in a religion which accepts the legend of the Fall of Man. To woman the *Genesis* tradition assigns the chief blame and the severest punishment. While Adam merely has to work, the sorrow of woman is "greatly multiplied," and her husband is definitely made her ruler and master. St. Paul, in the New Testament, lays down very clearly the duty of a wife to submit to her husband, who stands to her as Christ stands to the man. "Let woman learn in silence, with all subjection." In silence!

The Bible shows all through that to the Jews woman was an inferior being. Many of the Christian Fathers, however, went far beyond the Jews, and loaded women with coarse and violent abuse. Tertullian called woman "the devil's gate," and exhorted her "to dress in rags and remain in dirt as a sorrowful and penitent Eve" (*Religion of Woman*, p. 45). Woman was represented as the mother of all ills: she should be ashamed at the very thought that she is a woman; she should live in continual penance; women were forbidden by the Council of Auxerre in 578 to receive the Eucharist with bare hands. One bishop at another Council even denied that woman was a human being.

For centuries this insane twaddle was taught by the leaders of the Christian Church, and must have contributed to deprive women of many religious activities. "Women were forbidden, successively, to teach, to baptize, to preach, or take any order whatever" (*R. of W.*, p. 49). Quite lately woman has regained some measure of freedom. It has taken about 1,500 years to do it. The Church has always regarded the celibate or virgin as having chosen the better part.

We must remember that in ancient Rome the legal position of women was better than it was in England a generation or so ago. In his *Ancient Law* Sir Henry Maine says: "Christianity tended somewhat from the very first to narrow this remarkable liberty" He adds: "No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred upon them by the middle Roman law" (*R. of W.*, pp. 27, 28).

Polygamy is one of the surest signs of a disdain of women, yet it is sanctioned in the Old Testament, and was "rejected by

Greeks, Romans, and barbarians long before the Hebrews began to perceive its enormity" (*R. of W.*, p. 37).

I suppose no one will maintain that in our own time it was Christianity that got "Votes for Women." It is very clear that the improvement in woman's status has come about by secular rather than religious influences. Consider the facts of history, and you will receive with something more than a "*pinch* of salt" the misleading statement that Christianity has elevated the position of woman. Until fifty-two years ago everything an English woman owned or earned became, by the mere fact of marriage, the property of her husband. If any one considers such laws favourable to domestic happiness or the progress of civilization, I entirely disagree with him.

Let me now mention a few particulars in which Christianity has not merely failed to make good its claims, but has positively and most seriously hindered the progress of civilization.

Democracy.

The great modern democratic movement owes scarcely anything to the Christian Church. As an organization, that Church has been no friend to the workers. When children were compelled to work twelve and fourteen hours a day for a penny, it lifted not a finger to help them. The reforms of the nineteenth century—Factory Acts, Repeal of the Corn Laws, extension of the franchise, a national system of education (at the beginning of the nineteenth century only one man in six could read and write), Trade Unions, the rights of Nonconformists, and a hundred others—were carried only after bitter opposition, in which the representatives of Christianity in the House of Lords took their full share. A majority of the English bishops voted against the abolition of the death penalty for thefts of more than five shillings, the Roman Catholic and Jewish Disabilities Bills, the admission of Nonconformists to the Universities, the rights of Dissenters to burial in parish ground, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, reasonable liberty of divorce, disestablishment of the Irish Church, abolition of purchase in the Army, opening of museums on Sunday, and a score of other reforms. They gave no support to the abolition of the pillory, the stocks, branding, bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, duelling, prize-fighting, or to the movements for the prevention of cruelty to animals,

the flogging of women, soldiers, and sailors, and the reform of prisons and workhouses.

The recent concession to the people of Wales of disestablishing the Anglican Church in that principality was so deeply resented by the clergy that some of them have argued that the Great War was a judgment upon England for her sin.

Science.

Normally the attitude of official Christianity towards science has been that of suspicion and hostility. For his harmless speculations Giordano Bruno was burnt alive. Galileo, Buffon, and others, were compelled to retract truth and pretend falsehood. Sir Charles Lyell, Mary Somerville, Charles Darwin, and many more, were violently denounced by the clergy. The existence of the Antipodes and the rotundity of the earth were flatly denied long after they had been proved. Geology was a particularly dangerous study, since it cast doubt upon the dogma of the Fall of Man. Perhaps the science which has been most impeded by wilful theological ignorance is that of medicine. "The precepts of medicine," said St. Ambrose, "are contrary to celestial science." The New Testament makes it quite plain that Jesus himself believed evil spirits to be the cause of disease; the Church, quite naturally, adopted the belief, and by its absurd faith in relics and old bones prolonged for centuries the most mischievous superstitions. Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood, Jenner's researches in inoculation, Sir James Simpson's introduction of anæsthetics, sanitation, gas lighting, railway travelling, winnowing machines—even the innocent lightning conductor—and numberless other beneficent discoveries and conveniences, were passionately objected to on religious grounds. Reliance on supernatural agencies necessarily discourages the employment of natural means. Even to-day belief in demoniacal possession is not extinct. It led, as we all know, to the frightful delusion of witchcraft, a superstition clearly sanctioned by the Bible, which caused countless thousands of persons to be put to an agonizing death.

It cannot be denied that these things impeded to an incalculable degree the progress of civilization and the improvement of the conditions of life. That being so, I do not see how any fair-minded person can claim that Christianity is, or ever has been, a success. What success it has achieved with the few has been

compared with the harm it has done to the many. After all, the true test of any religion is its influence on mind and conduct, though a few zealous Evangelicals still maintain that conduct has nothing whatever to do with salvation.

The Roman Catholic Church.

Let us go a little further. The most powerful and influential branch of Christianity is the Roman Catholic Church. It claims to be the only true Church, with direct Divine authority, power to grant absolutions and indulgences, and in faith and morals possessing infallible wisdom. For 1,500 years its supremacy was almost unchallenged, and it is still the chief representative of the Christian religion. If it has not tried that religion, what has it been doing? Every reader of history knows how black its record is, and no one but a partizan will dispute that it has done at least as much harm as good. As Lecky said, it created more misery than it ever cured.

I have already referred to the gravest mischief done by the Church in discouraging independent thought, sometimes suppressing it by force, sometimes driving it into the barren channels of scholastic theology. No one can estimate the full extent of this mischief, for it works out its effects in later generations.

Now, the claim to authority, to infallibility, leads directly and logically to religious intolerance, with its invariable result—persecution. For example, only in 1832 Pope Gregory XVI condemned as a form of madness the opinion that liberty of conscience was a natural right; and in 1869 the Vatican Council anathematized all who should accept any truth of science which conflicted with revealed doctrines, or who should interpret such doctrines in a different sense from that laid down by the Church. More recently Pope Leo XIII protested against the toleration in Rome of Protestant public worship. Civilization could not go on if such principles were generally accepted.

As every one knows, the Church thought fit to establish the Holy Inquisition, the most terrible and diabolical engine of tyranny ever devised. It burnt alive thousands of persons, ruined numberless homes, and brought a great nation to the brink of ruin. Christian apologists dilate upon the horrors of the Roman Arena. They were innocent amusements compared with the calculated atrocities of the Inquisition. English readers are too little acquainted with the extent to which this nefarious

body stifled thought, punished innocence and favoured guilt, practised intrigue and compelled hypocrisy, lusted for money, destroyed commerce, suppressed knowledge, and, to crown its achievements, stamped out almost every vestige of spiritual religion.

In the present day we still have in the Roman Church the practice of confession to the priest, and the kindred claim to grant absolutions and dispensations. In the Church of England also confession is, I believe, now common. Any one who has any doubt as to how these priestly powers operate in practice should read up the subject in the works of Milman, Lea, Mosheim, Lecky, and others.

It may, of course, be asked what all this has to do with genuine Christianity. I reply, these things are not genuine Christianity. We are not discussing genuine Christianity. We are discussing the Christianity which has actually existed and its effects on the lives of men and women. No one denies that Christianity contains beautiful moral precepts. What we are talking about is the success it has had in getting them obeyed. If that practical influence has not been *on the whole* a failure, I do not know what the word "failure" means.

For 1,200 years the Church had things pretty much its own way. It ordered monarchs about as if they had been lackeys. It assumed, as a matter of course, that people had no right to think or to gain secular knowledge. It robbed, lied, forged, swindled, and murdered wholesale, to the glory of God. The catalogue of its offences is endless!

When, after being nearly stifled at birth, Science did begin to move about, the feeble and rickety infant was surrounded by such powerful enemies that it seemed predestined to an early grave.

What did Christianity do for civilization during that long 1,200 years?

We are told it preserved the learning of the ancients. It preserved some; it destroyed more. The manuscripts that were preserved could seldom be read by the monks. Most of them could neither read nor write.

Roman Catholic writers are fond of telling us that the Church held aloft the ideal of a spiritual power. Yes, but it stained that ideal by its own shameful failures and excesses. There seems no room for doubt that the frightful state of ignorance,

superstition, and immorality that Europe got into was largely, perhaps chiefly, owing to the teachings and the example of the Christian Church.

If Christianity is essentially a spiritual life, we have the extraordinary fact that during almost its whole career Christianity has been defeating its own object. All the Churches have sinned in this respect. They have buried the spirit under mountains of theology—a theology which to me is as ridiculous as it is immoral. Then they piled on more mountains of rites and ceremonies, which with the great mass of people made religion a mere system of mechanical observances. They preserved the form, but they destroyed the spirit of religion. The effects can be seen at the present day.

Baseless Claims.

Claims are frequently made for Christianity which are not justified by the facts. It is asserted that its rapid spread proves its Divine origin, that it put an end to the barbarous combats of gladiators in the Roman arena, that it originated hospitals, abolished slavery, elevated the position of woman, and so forth. With the last of these I have already dealt, and I will say only a few words about the others.

The marvellous spread of Christianity is a myth. "It may be confidently asserted that the conversion of the Roman Empire is so far from being in the nature of a miracle or suspension of the ordinary principles of human nature that there is scarcely any other great movement on record in which the causes and effects so manifestly correspond" (Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. i, p. 393).

In the book of *Acts* we are told that 3,000 people were converted in one day. We are also told in the same book that "many thousands" of Jews who believed were all "zealous for the law," which makes it clear that they did not accept Christianity as we understand it. St. Paul indulged in a very glaring exaggeration when he said that in his time the Gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven (*Colossians*, i, 23). That was not true then, and it has never been true since.

In sober fact, Christianity spread very slowly. Up to the time of Constantine its adherents probably never comprised more than five per cent. of the Empire's population, and, although after that the numbers grew (slowly), their quality in bulk underwent

a steady deterioration, until we plunge into the moral cesspool of the Dark Ages and a backward movement of civilization.

The gladiatorial games continued in the Western Empire for nearly ninety years after the establishment of Christianity. Christian writers make a great parade of the fact that in 400 A.D. they were stopped by the instrumentality of a devoted monk. They forget to add that these very spectacles were provided by a Christian Emperor. They were not fully and formally condemned till the year 500, and in the Eastern Empire were not suppressed till the close of the seventh century, and then only because they cost a lot to keep up. Two of the Pagan Emperors, Marcus Aurelius and Julian, strongly disapproved of the gladiatorial shows.

Hospitals were first established in India about 200 B.C. In Greece and Rome the sick poor had free medical treatment. The first Christian hospital was founded in the fourth century, and very few others were provided until the Moslem hospitals provoked a spirit of rivalry.

Slavery.

Perhaps the most singular claim put forward on behalf of the Christian religion is that it made an end of slavery. Now, slavery is sanctioned in the Old Testament; it is nowhere condemned in the New; for hundreds of years the Church raised no voice against it (the Stoics had condemned it), but actually in several cases made the punishments of slaves more severe. Lecky states that "slavery was distinctly and formally recognized by Christianity" (*History of European Morals*, vol. ii, p. 66).

The abomination of negro slavery was in fact a Christian institution—started in this land of liberty, England, when Sir John Hawkins sailed for Africa in the "Jesus" under the blessing of Almighty God. The Church employed slaves—the Council of Orleans (sixth century) expressly decreed that the descendants of slaves were to remain slaves for ever; and one of the Popes, Gregory the Great (sixth century), was the largest slaveholder of his time. When serfdom was abolished in France the Church still refused to emancipate its serfs. "As late as the nineteenth century the right of enslaving captives was defended by a French bishop" (Westermarck). In 1760 there were 80,000 black slaves in London, who were regularly advertised for sale

in the newspapers and bequeathed by will as property. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel held slaves, but did not think it worth while to give them religious instruction.

Only in 1833 was slavery abolished in England's colonies. In America it flourished until the latter half of the last century. Just think of it: slavery in a professedly Christian country in my own lifetime! Theodore Parker said the American Churches had never issued a single tract against property in human flesh and blood. On the contrary, they upheld it as a Divine institution, and themselves owned more than half-a-million negro slaves. Even the best bishops of the Episcopal Church were slaveholders. As is well known, a great Civil War was necessary before slavery could be done away with. A Christian scholar, Mr. Brace, writing of negro slavery, admits that "the guilt of this great crime rests on the Christian Church as an organized body" (*Bible in Europe*, p. 133, from *Gesta Christi*, p. 365).

Truth.

One of the most vital needs of society is regard for truth. This was supposed to be ensured by a religious form of oath, with what success may be inferred from a statement made by a Judge in 1912, that in the City of London alone perjury was committed at least 100 times a week.

The most incorrigible offender in this respect is the principal section of the Christian Church. By its teaching that no faith must be kept with heretics—that lying is in many cases justifiable, by its system of granting absolutions for cash down, by patronizing pious frauds and bogus miracles, and by authorizing a graduated scale on which truth might be doled out, it has paltered with and perverted truth to a degree below the average secular standard.

It is, indeed, doubtful whether the general state of morality in Christian countries is very much better than that of pagan countries; certainly it is not what it ought to be, and what it probably would be if the ethical precepts of Jesus were faithfully practised by his followers. As Mr. Chapman Cohen says: "That Christianity has been a moral failure no one can doubt. Nay, it is an assertion made very generally by Christians themselves. Right from New Testament times the complaint that the conduct of believers has fallen far short of what it should have been is constantly met with. And there is not a single direction in

which Christians can claim a moral superiority over other and non-Christian peoples. They are neither kinder, more sober, more chaste, nor more truthful than are non-Christian people" (*Grammar of Freethought*, p. 202).

Waning Influence.

I do not think it can be denied that during the last half-century the power of Christianity has perceptibly waned. It is in that very period that the pace of progress, scientific, educational, and social, has been most rapid. In other words, as Christianity has declined civilization has advanced—the world has improved.

Statistics.

As evidence of the decline of the belief in Christianity, I give a few figures from a recent work by a celebrated American scholar. In his *Belief in God and Immortality* Professor James Leuba, after very careful inquiry, finds among American college students that believers in God range from 82 per cent. down to 56 per cent., and believers in immortality from 80 per cent. to 60. Taking 1,000 representative men of science, he divided them into lesser and greater men. The lesser men showed an average of 48.5 per cent. believers in God, the greater men only 31.7. As to immortality, 59.6 per cent of the lesser men were believers, and only 37 per cent. of the more distinguished men. I cannot go into fuller detail, but would mention that of the psychologists 32 per cent. of the lesser men and only 13 per cent. of the eminent avowed belief in God, and 27 per cent. of the former and only 8.8 per cent. of the latter admitted belief in immortality.

The world's population now numbers about 1,600,000,000. I believe no one has ever claimed that more than about one-third of this number accept any form of Christianity. That Christianity has achieved this result (we need not look too closely into the means) is no great triumph for a Divine scheme which set out to save the world nearly 1,900 years ago.

But look a little more closely. Of the 500 millions who are said to be Christians, how many are really Christians? We cannot possibly tell; we cannot gauge the precise value of faith, though we can see something of its effect upon conduct.

Let us take first some of the so-called Christian nations. The greatest of them, the United States of America, has a population of over 100,000,000, of whom about 60,000,000 do not

belong to any Church. There are in Europe [illegible] countries where religion—or what is understood to be religion—still has a dominating influence. These countries are Russia, Spain, and Ireland, and it will be admitted that they are not among the foremost in the race of civilization. The leaders are France and Britain. The first has officially thrown religion overboard, and has for some years been a secular State; indeed, as far as can be gathered, only a small minority of the French people still adhere to their former national Church. Germany was, and probably will be again, one of the foremost of civilized nations; but the Christian religion so carefully taught in every German school took a form which makes one hesitate to term it a success. It should be added that in every civilized country an extraordinarily large proportion of criminals are (whatever the reasons) ranked as believers in the various forms of Christianity.

It was intended to give the figures of church attendance in this country, so as to see how many people are genuine enough Christians to make some public profession of their faith. Even this would not give us the number of real Christians—that is, Christians who honestly strive to embody the precepts of Christ in their daily lives—for it is notorious that many persons go to church from motives which may, without uncharitableness, be termed mixed. No exact figures seem to be available, but the following are probably not far wrong.

In 1919 the Church of England provided sittings for a total of 7,146,734 persons. Assuming that all the Free Churches and minor religious bodies provide about the same accommodation, we have some 15,000,000 people catered for. The number must be less than that, for no one supposes that every church and chapel in the country is crammed to the doors. However, take 15,000,000 as the figure for England and Wales. Deduct that from the population, roughly 39,000,000, and you get 24,000,000 who do not go to church. Some may consider that success; I call it failure.

If we take what is probably a better test, the number of communicants, the result is still more favourable to my case. The 1922 edition of the *Church of England Year-Book* gives the number of communicants at Easter, 1920, for Great Britain as 2,171,619. This figure may not represent the total for the year; but, assuming it to be doubled, it would appear that only about one person in nine thinks it worth while to take part in the most solemn rite of the Church.

THE F[illegible]

If only one-third, or one-fourth, or one-fifth of the people of a country openly profess Christianity, can it fairly be called a Christian country? And do not forget that of this minority the really devout are a mere handful. That state of things cannot be accounted for if the Christian religion was Divinely revealed.

To-day there is a general and apparently growing indifference to the Churches. The reasons given by apologetic writers show a curious inability to understand the problem, while the real reason is commonly overlooked. All along the Churches have been teaching what is not true. Many of the clergy know it, and the man in the street suspects it. At any rate, from all parts of the country arise lamentations over "our empty churches." The fact is too well known to need detailed evidence: I will quote only one witness—the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Speaking on October 13, 1921, at the Birmingham Church Congress, he said: "It is the dearth of preachers more than anything else that is keeping the churches empty." They are not empty, but they are not full. If they were full, they would hold about one-third of the population. Can you call such a meagre result anything but failure?

To sum up, we find: (1) That there is not a Christian nation in existence—that is, there is not a single State which obeys, or honestly tries to obey, the teachings of Christ; (2) That avowed Christians form a minority of even so-called Christian nations; (3) That the 500,000,000 Christian population of the world should probably be reduced to less than 100,000,000—say one-sixteenth of the whole; (4) That organized Christianity has ever since its establishment under Constantine been the enemy of liberty of thought, of the advance of science, and the progress of civilization.

If this is success, what is to be called failure?

CHARLES T. GORHAM.

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